

Committee on Resources

Testimony

Subcommittee on Water and Power

Thursday, April 17, 1997

1324 Longworth HOB, 9:30 A.M.

**HONORABLE JOHN GARAMENDI
DEPUTY SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
ON
DEVELOPMENT OF A LONG-TERM PLAN FOR THE
SACRAMENTO-SAN JOAQUIN-BAY DELTA
BEFORE THE
HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON WATER AND POWER RESOURCES
April 17, 1997**

Mr. Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to be here this morning to discuss with you our progress in developing a comprehensive long-term restoration plan for California's Bay-Delta ecosystem. I am pleased that my colleagues from the Environmental Protection Agency and State of California are here with me. Our joint participation demonstrates mutual concern, shared cooperation, and long-term commitment to meeting the challenge to protect our resources.

The CALFED Program

In December 1994, Federal agencies, State agencies, and representatives of agricultural, urban and environmental organizations signed what is known as the Bay-Delta Accord. The Accord described new ways to meet the requirements of several statutes, including the Endangered Species Act (ESA), the Central Valley Project Improvement Act (CVPIA), and the Clean Water Act (CWA). It also called on State and Federal agencies to develop a comprehensive long-term strategy to restore the health of the Bay-Delta and simultaneously meet the water needs of California's economy.

The CALFED Program identified the following major actions necessary for meeting our goals:

- 1) Ensure reliable water supplies for California's urban and agricultural economies;
- 2) restore the health of the Bay-Delta ecosystem;
- 3) improve water quality in the Bay-Delta and rivers flowing into it; and
- 4) enhance levee system stability.

In order to develop the Accord and carry out the long-term Bay-Delta Program, Federal and State agencies combined forces and formed CALFED. Four Federal agencies -- the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Reclamation, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Marine Fisheries Service -- began the effort. Six additional Federal agencies are about to join CALFED -- US Geological Survey, Bureau of Land Management, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Forest Service, Western Area Power Administration, and the Army Corps of Engineers. These additional agencies provide a vast array of expertise and programs critical to our long-term restoration efforts. Only through broad integration of

policies and programs, as well as new and creative ways of approaching problems, can we realize the goals laid out in the Bay-Delta Program. This year's tragic flooding is a prime example.

January 1997 Floods

Over the past several months, Federal and State agencies have been responding to the January floods that wreaked havoc throughout much of the Central Valley and the Bay-Delta system's many tributaries. Army Corps of Engineers, in collaboration with the CALFED and other Federal and state agencies, has undertaken major efforts to repair flood protection capabilities throughout the system. With the organization of CALFED, we have a unique opportunity to implement the restoration goals of the Bay-Delta Program and the Administration's complementary floodplain management strategies. Reducing flood damages and threats to life and property through cost-effective, and where appropriate, non-structural alternatives, can restore the natural values inherent to the floodplain and adjacent lands, and provide water quality, quantity, and ecosystem restoration benefits central to the long-term Bay-Delta Program.

Bay-Delta Funding

With an overwhelming endorsement from California voters for Proposition 204, bi-partisan support in the Congress that resulted in the passage of authorizing legislation last fall, and the unprecedented collaboration among the historically feuding water interests in California, we have an incredible opportunity to use the Bay-Delta funding provided for in the President's budget as a down payment on this major restoration effort.

The Program we are undertaking is one of the most significant restoration programs in this country, and has implications well beyond California. The Bay-Delta is the largest estuary on the Pacific coast, and serves as a stop-over point for hundreds of migratory birds and water fowl. The estuary is also highly important for maintaining fish populations. In addition, this system provides the water supply necessary to support California's agricultural economy -- an economy that produces 40% of the country's fruits and vegetables, as well as numerous other key crops that feed our nation. These are some of the most productive lands in the U.S.

Conclusion

This Committee has recognized the importance of the Central Valley to the health of California's economy and its diverse natural resource base. The CALFED Program is an innovative and unique approach to resolving complex resource issues that have burdened the State for decades. The Federal and State agencies are working together to develop solutions to these problems, along with the myriad of constituents who will be affected by this program -- whether they are residents and landowners along the rivers, farmers or urbanites who receive water from the Central Valley, or fishermen who rely on healthy populations of fish. We have a great opportunity to develop and implement the most significant restoration program of our time. We can only accomplish this if we all work together -- Federal and State agencies, Congress, local governments, and the myriad of private and non-government interests for whom we all work.

This concludes my statement. I would be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

###